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Back Down to Earth: Reassembling Latour's Anthropogenic Geopolitics

Philip Conway

The principal intuition of this essay is that Bruno Latour's explicitly or implicitly 'geopolitical' works – strewn as they are across many years and innumerable texts – have not yet been coherently assembled in such a way that their critical interrogation relative to contemporary debates in political geography can gainfully proceed. Such a reassembly must consider 'earlier,' 'later' and whatever other Latours. Although 'politics' *per se* has, in his more recent works, become just one 'mode of existence' among others, every aspect of Latour's thought has political ramifications. Consequently, his works must be read 'anthropologically' – that is to say, in cognisance of the interimplicatedness of every typological strand of 'the social' taken altogether. In short, this essay attempts not only to read Latour's works more interconnectedly than have other readers, it reads Latour's 'geopolitical' writings in a more joined-up fashion than he has himself written them. To this end, it: (a) introduces the major elements of Latour's political philosophy, highlighting the importance of geopolitical issues and concepts from his early works onwards; (b) *précise*s his fifteen 'modes of existence,' laying out the philosophical resources that will be subsequently rewoven; (c) examines six key allies with whom he rearticulates first *geo* (James Lovelock, Peter Sloterdijk) and *politics* (Walter Lippmann, John Dewey) separately and then geopolitics (Michel Serres, Carl Schmitt) itself; and, finally, (d) details his Anthropogenic geopolitics conceptually by speculatively intertwining the above with his recent Gifford Lectures. The reassembly attempted – or, rather, initiated – herein is, therefore, neither disinterested nor definitive. It is a working through of the possibilities internal to a specific, albeit sprawling, bundle of texts. It presents a reading both constructive and 'charitable' – not in order to obviate critical interrogations but in the hope of provoking a more incisive debate concerning Latour's works in relation to political geography.

Keywords: geopolitics; Bruno Latour; modes of existence; Gaia; Anthropocene

[...] geo-politics is not about human politics overlaid on the Earth's static frame, but politics concerning contradictory portions, visions, aspects of the Earth and its contending humans. (Latour 2014f, 52)

Introduction

The history of the word 'geopolitics' bears more than its share of ignominy. Coined by Swedish political scientist and politician Rudolf Kjellén (as '*Geopolitik*') in 1899 and soon applied to the imperialist, state-serving geographies of the time, by the mid-1920s 'geopolitics' had become a commonplace of political elites from Germany to Japan (Dodds and Atkinson 2000). It fell from favour after World War II, having become associated with Nazi expansionism, but was revived during the Cold War as the likes of Henry Kissinger sought to articulate superpower Grand Strategy (Dalby, Routledge, and Tuathail 1998). While always contested (Kearns 2009), from the early 1990s the discourse came under increasing fire from advocates of 'critical geopolitics' who took issue with the essentialist, fatalistic naturalisation of violence and enmity that geopolitical thinking habitually engendered (e.g. Dalby 1991; Dalby and Tuathail 1998; Tuathail 1996). 'Geopolitics,' however prefixed, is today affixed to a dizzyingly wide array of scholarly endeavours; however, it tends to retain a thematic connection to territorial competition, state violence and the international.

It is in this context that Simon Dalby, Stuart Elden, Nigel Clark, Kathryn Yusoff and others have recently debated concepts such as 'geologic' and 'Anthropocene' geopolitics (Dalby 2007, 2013a, b, 2014a, b; Elden 2013b, 2015; Clark 2011, 2013a, b, 2014; Yusoff 2013a, b; Yusoff et al. 2012). In the face of present ecological and political crises, these authors argue that the *geo-* in geopolitics must have its etymological connection with *gē* (earth) radically reaffirmed. Can we return, asks Elden (2013b, 15), 'to thinking about land, earth, world rather than simply the global or international?' What would happen if *geo-* implied not some reified spatial realm but, rather, 'the earth; the air and the subsoil; questions of land, terrain, territory; earth processes and understandings of the world'? These questions are by no means unprecedented within political geography; however, nor are they satisfactorily answerable given present resources. Elden therefore sketches a research agenda from which this essay takes its lead, specifically by examining the recent political works of Bruno Latour.

The story of Latour's political thought, like so many French intellectuals (Ahluwalia 2010), begins with his experience of colonialism. From 1973 to 1975, while writing his thesis on Charles Péguy's *Clio* and the biblical exegete Rudolf Bultmann, he avoided military service by electing to teach at a *lycée* in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It was also at this time that he was introduced to 'the puzzles of anthropology' for the first time. For 'a provincial, bourgeois Catholic,' this immersion in 'the cauldron of neocolonial Africa,' with its racism, violence and 'the most predatory forms of capitalism,' was revelatory (Latour 2013a, 289-90; Schmidgen 2014). Combined with his prior intuitions regarding the specific truth conditions of religious speech, it prompted a career-defining realisation. The Ivorians, to the colonial eye, were a *mêlée* of all manner of explanation-begging cultural peculiarities. The Westerners, however, understood their own conduct by the singular standards of Science and Rationality. The pedagogues of the *mission civilisatrice* explained but needed no explanation. There could be no anthropology of the Moderns as they were the *one* culture with access to Nature – or so they thought. This 'flagrant asymmetry' formed the *problématique* that would lead Latour to declare that 'we have never been modern' and then, four decades after Abidjan, to publish *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (AIME) (2013c).

Latour's entire career can, therefore, be read as 'geopolitical' in a philosophico-anthropological sense; however, it wasn't until his recent Gifford Lectures that Latour took up the term explicitly, if idiosyncratically, by articulating and advocating a 'new geopolitics of the Anthropocene' (2013b, 2); that is, geopolitics understood as the politics of the Earth itself – as, in a manner of speaking, 'Gaia-politics.' Similarly, James Lovelock's famous Earth goddess¹ had been a recurrent motif in Latour's work since the turn of the century (e.g. [1999]2004a, 5; 2007a, 2010a, 2011d); however, it wasn't until these lectures, titled *Facing Gaia*, that Latour undertook a thorough reading of Lovelock's work for the first time. In so doing, he produced not just an alternative, Earthbound 'geopolitics' but a geopolitical theology of Nature (cf. Schmitt 2005) that encompassed not only politics *per se* but also science, law and, crucially, religion.

The principal intuition of this essay is that, while Latour is well-known within political geography, his explicitly or implicitly 'geopolitical' works have not yet been

¹ Gaia: one of the primordial Greek deities, personifying earth [*gē*].

coherently assembled in such a way that their critical interrogation relative to contemporary debates can gainfully proceed. While there is an unciteably vast transdisciplinary literature on Latour's work, little of it examines his recent political writings and that which does (e.g. Harman 2014) treats his political thought as a single, isolatable strand within his broader corpus. Although 'politics' as such has, lately, become just one 'mode of existence' among others, *every* aspect of Latour's thought has political ramifications. Consequently, his works must be read 'anthropologically'—that is to say, in cognisance of the interimplicatedness of every typological strand of 'the social' taken altogether.²

However, this is not a merely pedagogical exercise. While 'Gaia' was posed as the pivotal figure in both *AIME* (2013c) and the Gifford Lectures (2013b), the precise relationship between these parallel texts is not altogether clear. Therefore, this essay attempts not only to read Latour's works more interconnectedly than have other readers, it reads Latour's 'geopolitical' writings in a more joined-up fashion than he has himself written them. To this end it proceeds thus:

- (1) Introduces the major elements of Latour's political philosophy, highlighting the importance of geopolitical concepts from his early works onwards.
- (2) Précises *AIME* and its fifteen 'modes of existence,' laying out the philosophical resources to be subsequently rewoven.
- (3) Examines six key allies with whom Latour rearticulates first *geo* (James Lovelock, Peter Sloterdijk) and *politics* (Walter Lippmann, John Dewey) separately and then geopolitics (Michel Serres, Carl Schmitt) itself.
- (4) Conceptually reconstructs Latour's Anthropocenic geopolitics, speculatively intertwining the above with *Facing Gaia*.

I conclude by examining the possibilities and problems that Latour's work poses to scholars of geopolitics, particularly with regard to aforementioned debates.

² Although previously rejecting 'the social' as a concept (Latour 2005b), in *AIME* this term comes to designate the modes of existence taken altogether (Latour 2013c, 353; cf. Tarde [1893]2012); in other words, it is that towards which a philosophical anthropology strives (Latour 1993, 100; Descola 2014).

Genealogy

Irreductions

In an unassuming and, until recently (Harman 2009), largely overlooked appendix to *The Pasteurization of France* ([1984]1988a),³ Latour set out his philosophical vision for the first time. A polemical, irreverent and, by his own estimation, ‘juvenile’ text (2010b, 3), *Irreductions* presumed to abolish the binary opposition of force and reason by constructing a common ‘infralanguage’ for both science and politics based upon the now famous ontology of translation, trials, alliances and actants. Christening this his ‘*Tractatus Scientifico-Politicus*’ (7), alluding to Spinoza’s own heretical treatise (Nadler 2011), Latour mixed Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Leibnizian monadology and Greimasian semiotics with a large dose of Nietzschean will to power in order to produce a kind of metaphysical Machiavellianism, a politics ‘extended to the politics of things-in-themselves’ (211). In this philosophy: a thing is what it does; it is only as strong as its alliances; it grows stronger by temporarily enrolling and subordinating others; entities may aspire to universality but are limited to particularity; no substance undergirds action; restless, dynamic, vigilant activity is therefore a perpetual necessity; every thing is the result of vectors, trials and battles of force.

Written at the height of the ‘second’ Cold War and shot through with allusions to the nuclear terror, *Irreductions* is consonant with Latour’s attitude throughout the early part of his career that ‘technoscience is part of a war machine and should be studied as such’ (Latour 1987b, 172; cf. Latour 1988b; Latour and Woolgar [1979]1986, 212; Latour and Callon 1981). Philosophically, it forms not the foundation but the toolbox for his later work. He would gradually desist from making Machiavellian alliance-building the default mode of association for all existents – i.e. making every thing ‘political’; however, non-human things would remain centre-stage, even as his politics became more precisely defined.

Moderns

In a book that remains the outstanding landmark in his career, Latour introduced his signature thesis and refrain: *We Have Never Been Modern (WHNBM)* ([1991]1993). We Westerners, we Moderns are, claims Latour, beholden to an unwritten, unspoken

³ Published in French as ‘*Pasteur: guerre et paix des microbes* [war and peace of microbes].’

‘Constitution,’ a kind of semi-official political-metaphysical common sense founded on the strict opposition of Politics and Science – a divide to which corresponds *two* kinds of ‘sovereign’: the State and Nature (cf. Shapin and Schaffer 1985; Hobbes [1651]1968). For many years this theoretical opposition held, its associated practices thrived and so ‘we thought we were Modern’ – but it all worked *too well*. The year 1989 was, for Latour, doubly world-historical: the Wall fell but, at least as importantly, the climate irrupted into popular consciousness and was permanently engraved in the international political agenda (8-10). Henceforth, argues Latour, our *non*-Modern predicament is the ever increasing entanglement of humans and non-humans – a situation both enabled and ignored by the Modern Constitution. In such a condition, the distinct onto-administrative columns of Science-Nature/Politics-State break down. Therefore, reasons Latour, we must invent *another* Constitution, one that recognises that history is not a process of supersession and overcoming but rather of ever greater attachment and co-dependence; one that understands that the West differs from its Others only in the intensity of its socio-technical hybridisation, not in kind – ‘we are as different from the Achuar as they are from the Tapirape or the Arapesh’ (107); a Constitution, in short, that finds humans, non-humans and hybrids a political-metaphysical Settlement in the absence of any stable or reliable concept of Nature *and* without the now absurd teleological pretensions of the colonial ‘frontier of modernisation.’

Latour is, by this point, no longer arguing that science and politics are one and the same but rather that to define one is to define the other (4); he thus opens the door to their formal distinction. Things, meanwhile, remain at the centre of politics but for slightly different reasons than before: it is not that every thing is political *per se* but rather that politics has become unthinkable without the immense irruption of hybrid things into collective affairs.

Collectives

WHNBM concludes with an enigmatic call for a ‘Parliament of Things’ (142-45); *Politics of Nature (PoN)* ([1999]2004a) develops this notion, envisaging an abstract political body in which a Collective of humans and non-humans could settle their issues via a ‘due process’ that grants science and politics distinct roles with neither overriding the other. The mechanics of this hypothetical, scale-nonspecific polity are complex and not directly relevant here; however, several aspects are of paramount importance.

Firstly, because the Collective makes no *a priori* distinction as to what beings it includes (unlike Society, which is restricted to naked humans and their language), it requires an alternative means of distinguishing inside from outside, polity from environment. Latour finds this principle in Carl Schmitt's (2007) friend/enemy distinction: the enemy is that which is excluded from the Collective but may be included later; interiority and exteriority thus depend upon *decision*.⁴ Secondly, and slightly confusingly, the Collective has another kind of exteriority: "collective" in the singular does not mean that there is just one of them, but that its function is to bring together a collection of some sort, in order to make its members capable of saying "us" (210) – there are the Achuar, the Arapesh, the West.... Thirdly, when 'Nature' disappears, collective affairs are plunged into a 'state of anarchy' – that is, there is no mutually recognised arbiter for political-cosmological disagreements anymore. Again, Latour channels Schmitt: under the Modern Constitution there could be no 'war,' only 'police operations' because ontological disagreements were referred to Nature as a transcendent arbiter via its transparent intermediary Science, a process categorically distinct from politics. This no longer holds. Finally, under such anarchic conditions, inter-collective relations become a matter of *diplomacy* (Stengers 2011a, 2013) as no group can declare itself an Occident or a 'West' that differs absolutely from an Eastern Orient by virtue of having access to Nature via Science. It is, Latour argues, only by understanding the disappearance of the old dual-sovereignty regime, accepting the *risk* that this ungroundedness confers on all beings, and then recognising the reality of the resultant 'war' that diplomatic 'peace negotiations' can begin.

Written in response to the so-called 'Science Wars' of the mid-1990s, in *PoN* science is not 'politics by other means' nor is 'everything political.' Instead, science now becomes that which renders the universe – or, rather, pluriverse (cf. James 1909) – articulable and facilitates the representation of non-humans. Politics, meanwhile, becomes that which collects the Collective and enables the gradual assembling of a more agreeable cosmos – as opposed to a *kakosmos*⁵ (Latour 1999a, 16; 2004a, 217) – in a complex, dynamic public space in which nothing is excluded *a priori* but not

⁴ Latin *decidere* 'to cut off.'

⁵ Greek *kosmos* 'good order, well-ordered arrangement'; *kakos* 'bad, evil.' Cf. Clark (2011, 211-14) who doesn't recognise this distinction in his reading of Latour. 'Cosmopolitics' derives from Stengers (2010, 2011a).

everything can be included either. Politics becomes, in a mantra, ‘the progressive composition of the common world’ (53).

While Latour’s more recent political works certainly follow on from this *fin de siècle* text, the proceduralism of the Parliament has been largely abandoned. To put it in Latour’s own words,⁶ it is a work appropriate to ‘an earlier, less benighted time’ (2014a, 5). While retaining the agenda of ‘progressive composition,’ Latour’s politics begins to appear less in the guise of a ‘Parliament’ than a ‘generalised international’ (Edkins and Zehfuss 2005). In order to reckon with Gaia in all her inherent immanence and irruptive imminence, Latour turns to geopolitics – and to ‘values.’

Inquiry⁷

Simultaneously a magnum opus and a work in progress, *AIME* (2013c) synthesises the larger part of Latour’s works to date, displaces some previous tenets⁸ and introduces a metaphysical quasi-system that lays itself open to interventions from ‘co-investigators’ who wish to alter or add to the preliminary ‘report.’⁹ It finally fulfils the challenge posed in Abidjan in the mid-1970s: to produce a philosophical anthropology of the West. Responding to the titular provocation of *WHNBM*, it asks: if ‘we’ have never been Modern then what have ‘we’ been?

By separating ‘values’ from ‘institutions,’ Latour distinguishes reference, technology, law, religion – all those things the Moderns are said to cherish – from their concrete, entangled instantiations. To each of these valuable values he accords a ‘mode of existence.’¹⁰ *AIME* then constructs an alternative metaphysic that, it is hoped, will

⁶ This comment was directed at Michel Serres’ *Natural Contract* (1995) but seems justifiably transferrable.

⁷ All references in this section (‘Inquiry’) are to *AIME* (2013c), unless otherwise stated.

⁸ For example, ‘hybrids’ are no longer ‘the order of the day’ (Dalby 2003, 182); Latour now rejects this concept (2013d, 561).

⁹ <http://www.modesofexistence.org/>

¹⁰ This concept derives primarily from Souriau (1943) and Simondon (1958). See also: Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 72-75)

institute and instaur¹¹ these precious modes more competently and progressively than the Modern Constitution.

I am going to proceed as if the Moderns had discovered during their history – most often as borrowings from other civilizations, moreover – a number of values that they hold dear and that constitute, as it were, their very self-definition, even though they have never had an entirely firm grasp on these values. (14)

The days where ‘we’ could go around declaring our values to be Natural, Universal and thus Obligatory are over; in order to act diplomatically rather than imperially, ‘we’ must come to recognise those things we value *as values* – and defend them as such. By way of *AIME*’s ‘charitable fiction’ (15), Latour hopes to compel those-who-thought-they-were-Modern to ‘present themselves once again to the rest of the world’ (13).

The modal metaphysic that results from this mission is consistent with the basic kernel of Latour’s thinking since at least *Irreductions*: that things are events and continuities are the results of specific actions rather than underlying substances. The difference is that there is now no *one* way of associating, enunciating, relating, articulating, persisting, becoming: there are many. *AIME*’s fifteen modes are neither definitive nor exhaustive; Latour claims that they are derived from experience (James 1912) rather than *a priori* ratiocination and are therefore amendable and open to addition. The modes are divided into five sets of three and each is accorded an abbreviation (e.g. [rep]); when modes meet this is called a ‘crossing’ (e.g. [rep·ref]). *AIME* can be understood as a kind of semiotics writ-metaphysical in that each mode has its own semiotic rulebook with unique ‘felicity conditions’ (488-89; cf. Austin 1962) – particular ways of distinguishing success from failure, truth from falsehood. Crucially, all modes are ontological equals and must be encountered on their own terms. For this reason they are explicated herein individually.

Of course, such a project defies summary (cf. 244). The purpose of the following is not, therefore, to stand for the text it condenses. Rather, this partial and self-interested reconstruction (a) *précise*s the specific onto-political propositions that Latour claims to be submitting to ‘the planetary negotiation that is already underway’

¹¹ The French ‘*instauration*’ translates as ‘establishing’ or ‘instituting’ but is used by Latour as a replacement for ‘construction [*fabrication*]’ (151-178; cf. Souriau 1943). See also: Latour (2011b), Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 43).

(17); and (b) sketches the skyline of the conceptual metropolis that will be creatively recombined in the hazily impressionistic portrait of Gaia (and her politics) that is to follow. These modes are summarised, therefore, in order to both explicate the precise propositional content of Latour's geopolitical philosophy (as it stands at the time of writing) and to lay the conceptual basis for the latter part of this essay.

[5] Infrastructure

The final group of Latour's 5x3 schema forms the infrastructure of the *Inquiry* and so must be understood before the others.

[net]works

The mode explored by *Irreductions* and actor-network theory (Latour and Callon 1981; Latour 1988a, 2005b), [net] enables the tracing and assembling of all the heterogeneous elements required for any 'course of action' regardless of domain or interpretive key. This mode suffers from 'ontological anaemia' (163) in that it paints a monochrome world that disregards modal specificities in order to achieve maximum associational connectivity. It is only the starting point for *AIME* – no being can live by [net] alone.

[pre]position

The mode that founds *AIME*, [pre] compels a moment of indecision in which existents must decide *how* – in what manner, by which fashion – to pass next. *AIME* focuses on neither nouns nor verbs but rather *adverbs*: politically, habitually, morally, etc. The momentary hesitation of pre-positioning enables the detection and selection of these adverbial, modal nuances. [net] only follows the patterns of stitching, [pre] captures the variegation of the threads – it renders the world in full colour.

[dc]

Alluding to the 'double click' of a computer mouse that produces information seemingly directly, instantaneously and without mediation, [dc] is not really a mode at all but an 'anti-mode,' a Cartesian 'evil genius' that attempts to short-circuit all modes by reducing them to the instantaneous, transcendent transfer of information. It is a conceptual character (much like 'the Moderns') that serves as a foil to the *Inquiry*.

[1] First

The first group of modes, although the most general, do not form the ‘foundation’ for the others, even if they radically precede them. They are, like the ideal Prime Minister, first among equals.

[rep]roduction

When a mayfly hatches, finds a mate, lays its eggs and perishes in a single day; when a stone monument endures for millennia whilst unceasingly performing an energetic ‘dance of electrons’ (Whitehead 1920, 182): both are examples of [rep]roduction. Both Darwinian and Whiteheadian, [rep] is the mode through which an entity maximises continuities in order to remain in existence a while longer (91-2). *Lineages* are those chains of living beings that achieve reproduction in the conventional sense of that word. *Lines of force* are those things falsely termed ‘inanimate’ that achieve continuity through other creative means – e.g. Whitehead’s ‘dance.’ However, [rep] is restricted to neither mayflies nor monuments; ‘it concerns everything that maintains itself: languages, bodies, ideas, and of course institutions’ (99-102). [rep] dispenses with ‘Nature’ as a ‘unified material medium’; instead, every thing produces its own articulation, its own ‘meaning’; there is ‘creativity all the way down’ (Latour 2009b, 468-70).

[met]amorphosis

By passing through [met]amorphoses, beings achieve subsistence not by maximising continuities [rep] but by maximising *transformations*. This mode is explicated in *AIME* through psychogenesis and ethnopsychiatry (e.g. Nathan 2000) but is ‘infinitely more inventive’ than that – the gene mutations of evolutionary biology are as exemplary of this experience as are therapeutic practices (203, 287). [rep] and [met] together form ‘a sort of matrix or kneading process from which the "human" can take nourishment [...] branch out, accelerate, be energized’; these modes are said to ‘precede the human, infinitely’ (203).

[hab]it

In the vast majority of existential situations there is no need to undergo the hesitations of [pre]. [hab]it allows beings to settle into well-oiled rhythms; it smoothes the fractious

discontinuities in evental becoming, achieving an ‘an effect of immanence’ by veiling ‘all the little transcendences that being-as-other explores.’ However, habits are not ‘shams,’ or ‘dogma’ – on the contrary, the constancy they provide ‘makes the world *habitable*’ (268; cf. Heidegger 1971). Habits are good or bad, true or false ‘depending on whether they veil or lose what has launched them’; in other words, a good habit retains the ‘memory’ of [pre] and can return to it as necessary; bad habits abandon [pre], forget being-as-*other* and doom existents to their present rhythmic patterns (266-72).

[2] *Quasi-objects*

As we approach quasi-objects, we are no longer investigating the radically pre-human but, rather, enter the realm of anthropogenesis (Leroi-Gourhan [1964]1993) where ‘humanoids *became* humans’ because of their creative associations with technology, fiction and, finally, reference (372).

[tec]hnology

This mode predates the evolution of anatomically modern humans by hundreds of thousands of years. When an inventor cries ‘Eureka!’ having fixed the bug in his contraption; when a chimpanzee fashions a twig into a tool to extract delicious termites from beneath the earth: both are equally [tec]hnological.¹² This mode is found in the hack, the ruse, the inventive rupture. It denotes not ‘an object, a result, but a movement’ that takes from both inert and living entities, including the body of the technologist, ‘what is needed to hold together in a lasting way, to freeze, as it were, one of the moments of metamorphosis’ (223-25). [tec] *folds* time, it *pleats* space (Latour 2002a; cf. Serres and Latour 1995, 60-61; Deleuze 1993); it creates objects that enjoy the temporary obduracy of [rep] but with a repeatability that enables *trials*. Techniques create the possibility not only of technological civilisation but of the human itself (Latour and Strum 1986; Simondon 1958).

[fic]tion

There is no mode of ‘language.’ Fiction, from the Latin *fictionem*, should connote ‘fashioning, forming.’ [fic] folds [tec] beings once again, obtaining another kind of

¹² Greek *tekhnē* ‘art, skill, craft.’

alteration that engenders worlds of shifting figurations – beings that may slide from material to material but never transcend their media. Such entities ‘depend on our *solicitude*’; ‘if you turn off the radio, leave the cinema, or close the book’ they disappear (325-26; cf. Latour 2011b; Souriau 1943); they must always be ‘accompanied, interpreted.’ However, their force is formidable. Without the shifting of figurations, the play of signifiers or the intricate semantics of clothing and architecture, there could be no art, politics, religion, law or science (249-50).

[ref]erence

A pedologist digs soil samples from a carefully mapped section of a living rainforest [rep] and, via specialised instruments [tec], gradually [met]amorphoses their epistemically pertinent properties into transportable, manipulable inscriptions [fic]; an informative chain of transformations [ref] is thus produced (Latour 1999a, 24-79). Knowledge is never achieved by a *salto mortale*¹³ between two points (James 1912), but always through a ‘dialectic of gain and loss’ (1999a, 70) that maintains constants at the cost of transformations at every stage. It may be rare but when continuous referential connectivity is achieved, truth circulates ‘like electricity through a wire’ (1999a, 69).

In the end, when everything works, when the network is in place, access is indeed obtained; you put your finger on a map, a document, a screen, and you have in your hand for real, incontestably, a crater of the Moon, a cancerous cell deep within a liver, a model of the origin of the universe. You really do have the world at your fingertips. (109)

There is correspondence, there is objective knowledge when there is *circulating*, *instrumented* reference.¹⁴ Nobody is born a knowing subject but we become epistemically *subjectivised* in our encounters with referential *circuits*.

[3] Quasi-subjects

Quasi-objects let us know, speak, create, leave our mark on the world (372); without them there would be – without irony or idealism – no human beings. The modes of

¹³ Italian for somersault; *salto* ‘leap,’ *mortale* ‘deadly.’

¹⁴ Latin *referre* ‘to carry back.’

quasi-subjects add further strata to this inheritance; they give us groups, responsibilities, rights, solidarities.

[pol]itics

This mode can occur in any collective situation: ‘A family, even an individual, a firm, a laboratory, a workshop, a planet, an organization, an institution: none have less need for this regime than a state or a nation, a rotary club, a jazz band or a gang of hooligans’ (2003, 149). However, it can fail to occur in any collective situation too: ‘it is perfectly possible to talk of elections, of power struggles, of international relations, of influence, etc., without for all that saying these things *politically*’ (2003, 161). In its most mundane instance, [pol] involves the enunciation of a ‘we’ that can be accepted or rejected by those it convokes; whenever adherence is achieved, a ‘Circle’ of representation (on the outward) and obedience (on the return) is thus traced – passing through an undetermined ‘state of exception’ at each stage (346; cf. Schmitt 2007) – and ‘temporarily associated wills’ are produced, obtaining ‘unity from a multitude’ (133). This is the only way to acquire freedom and autonomy in a Collective (cf. Lippmann 1925; Schneewind 1998).

I am *auto*-nomous (as opposed to *hetero*-nomous) when the law (*nomos*) is both what I produce through the expression of my will and what I conform to through the manifestation of my docility. (2003, 150)

[law]

In French law it is *moyen* (means) – ‘do we have a means for that?’; in British law it is *grounds* – ‘what grounds do we have?’ These are the legal entities that permit the movement ‘from facts to principles’ (364). A lawyer inspects a contract, signed by his hand years previously; the mere persistence of his body [rep] from that space-time to this is not sufficient to make the actantial shifting-out [fic] of the document hold to him; these disjunctions are only bridged, the utterances only made *binding*, in [law] (McGee 2013, 214). All ‘law can grasped as an obsessive effort to make enunciation assignable’ (Latour 2010d, 295). These ‘obsessive efforts’ needn’t necessarily pass through the files, journals and courtrooms of formal, institutionalised law – ‘the anthropology of law attests to hundreds of astonishing procedures for attaching promises to their authors by solemn oaths and imposing rituals’ (371); however, in its endless cataloguing of

decisions and reattaching of enunciations and enunciators ‘via the perilous routes of signatures, archives, texts and files,’ the folophilia of formalised law demonstrates legal translations most intensely. Any legal relation can be (literally) put to trial and any can fail but if they hold then *nomos* circulates through the Collective and ‘humans may live in the house of law’ (2010d, 274-77).

[rel]igion

If α asks ε ‘do you love me?’ and ε replies ‘why are you asking me this? I told you so on the 28th of April!’ then ε has misunderstood α ’s entreaty as a request for knowledge [ref] or, worse, for unmediated truth [dc] when α was really requesting a *renewal*, a *revitalisation* of their relationship. If ε had instead replied ‘of course, my love, always’ this would, in speaking the language of love, have produced a ‘scale model’ (Latour 2013e, 118) of the [rel]igious experience. The love engendered by the Good News, the gospel, establishes an immanent incarnation that produces *persons* by bestowing unity upon them through a gaze of undivided attentiveness (302). There is no God but the immanent God that is realised through the soul-saving ‘procession’ of hermeneutic ‘betrayals, translations, fidelities, inventions’ (315). Religious translation does not access the *far away* [ref] but rather the *nearby*, the neighbour, the *prochain* (321); it produces not information but *tradition* – ‘each purification becomes a new treasure that is added to the sacred repository and enriches it, complicates it, further’ (2001, 225). Religion doesn’t establish facts but rather tremulates ‘the make-up of daily existence’ (2009b, 462); suitably amplified it might even usher in ‘a virtual people of the saved and the newly close who elude all borders,’ a ‘sacred nation’ (2013e, 148, 161).

[4] Oikonomia

The Greek root of ‘economy,’ *oikonomia*,¹⁵ has spawned many meanings over the millennia. From the Stoic *kosmos*, ‘economized by divine providence or by nature herself’ (Leshem 2013, 37), through the *oikonomia psuchōn* (economy of souls) of the Patristic Christians to the neoliberal Economy-as-supercomputer (Mirowski 2013), it has signified a Rational and thus Obligatory order of things. ‘The Economy’ – that other Modern sovereign (Foucault 2008) – is, for Latour, an unholy amalgam that must be ontologically disaggregated.

¹⁵ *Oikos* ‘house, habitation.’

[att]achment

If we describe ‘the Economy’ as the coldly calculating system that circulates goods through the Collective we misspeak (at least) twice. First, the foundation of these flows is not ‘cold calculation’ but ‘passionate interest’ – calculation, at whatever temperature, *follows* the production of desires. Second, these passions form not a ‘system’ but, rather, specific kinds of networks. For any thing there is a list that defines ‘not only the other existents through which it has to pass in order to subsist but those that it *can no longer do without*’ (432); these intense, fervent, undisentangleable relations are its [att]achments. Economics as ‘the science of passionate interests’ (Latour and Lépinay 2009) *should*, therefore, be the science of producing calculative instruments that better format the circulation of the Collective’s attachments, better habitating the *Umwelten*¹⁶ that these interests stitch together (Latour and Callon 1997). However, an *Umweltökonomie* of this scope remains uninvented.

[org]anisation

When Peter and Paul agree to meet tomorrow at 5:45 under the big clock at the Gare de Lyon they construct a ‘script’ [fic] that exerts a ‘hold’ on them (390). However, no script is ever simply ‘followed’ because scripts overlap, pile-up, contradict, bury one another. Paul may have only one body [org·rep] but ‘Paul’ undergoes indefinitely many shiftings-out [org·fic], being pulled in many directions at once (400). [org]anisation is, then, the writing, overwriting, following-through and working-out of scripts that ‘hold’ those they signify (391; cf. Cooren 2000). However, [org] crosses more than [fic]; when scripts become ‘ballasted’ [org·tec] their force and durability is amplified manyfold:

Who can fail to feel tiny while approaching the Pentagon? Facing the Egyptian pyramids, how could the most narcissistic general, before starting a battle, not relate his own small size to the "forty centuries that loom over him"? (418)

Once sedimented, materialised, mineralised, scripts may cast a formidable shadow long after their organisers have returned to dust; thus, mountains of these fossilised injunctions pile up all around us. These stacking-effects – and the ever steeper gradients

¹⁶ German ‘enviroming-worlds’ or ‘environments.’

of resistance they produce (419) – disabuse us of any ‘Mega-Script’ (403) needed to macro-organise the Whole. ‘The Economy’ is, therefore, a superfluous hypothesis.

[mor]ality

Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only. (Kant [1785]1959, 47)

Gone are the days when we could ignore this beautiful maxim’s subtle yet disastrous corollaries: that non-humans could be treated as pure means and membership of the Kingdom of Ends could be decided once and for all by philosopher’s fiat.

[...] an enigma is posed to every existent: "If I exist only through the other, which of us then is the end and which the means? I, who have to pass by way of it, am I its means or is it mine? Am I the end or is it my end?" [...] That tree, this fish, those woods, this place, that insect, this gene, that rare earth – are they my ends or must I again become an end for them? (454-55)

In order for the Collective to be composed, some entities must be made means and others ends; the Optimum must be calculated [mor] and decisions made [pol]. ‘The Economy’ as that which has always already calculated the Obligatory Optimum thus becomes the epitome of immorality, short-circuiting, as it does, both economics and politics [dc]. Moral goodness henceforth becomes, first, sensitivity to moments of means-ends indeterminacy and, second, a commitment to continually reprise the calculation of the optimal distribution of means and ends – to calculate the incalculable in service of a ‘civilization to come’ (462; Latour and Hache 2010).

With this messianic message, *AIME*’s philosophico-geopolitical journey arrives at its apotheosis.

Geopolitics¹⁷

Though partial, selective and simplistic, the above (a) traces the tacitly geopolitical character of Latour’s philosophy from its inception, (b) outlines the basics of his mature philosophy, every aspect of which has political ramifications, and, at the same time, (c)

¹⁷ All references in this section (‘Geopolitics’) are to *Facing Gaia* (2013b), unless otherwise stated.

précises his diplomatic propositions *vis-à-vis* the West's 'values.' Thus equipped, we can now creatively reconstruct Latour's geopolitics more comprehensively by, first, examining several of the intellectual allies that he enrolls and then, second, articulating its key concepts, drawing out connections between *AIME* and *Facing Gaia* that Latour might imply but does not specify.

Allies

Lovelock

If Galileo's great discovery was that the Earth is an astral object like any other then James Lovelock's great discovery is that Galileo was wrong: the Earth is 'possibly unique in the universe' because it is a *living* planet (Lovelock 2009, 1). Terrestrial life has flourished for more than two thirds of the Earth's 4.5 billion years – an ostensibly miraculous feat. The sun becomes significantly hotter as it ages¹⁸ and the planet has suffered myriad astronomic cataclysms in its time. The 'Earth *should be dead*, just like Mars. It is not' (62). This is Lovelock's dangerous idea: life on Earth actively maintains the chemical and climatic conditions conducive to its present 'ensemble of organisms' (Lovelock 2006, 208).¹⁹ The Earth terraforms itself – *la Terre se terraforme*.

Latour's reading of Lovelock is enthusiastic but creative, arguing against the characterisation of Gaia as a 'superorganism' and for a 'charitable' (58) reading that understands it as a loose, dynamic plurality (2004a, 199; 2014d). In this understanding, Gaia is not an overarching über-agency but rather a centreless, irreducible entanglement comprising many *disunified* agencies that achieve a collective goal: 'to keep the Earth habitable for whatever are its inhabitants' (Lovelock 2006, 207-8). If organisms adapt their environment to their needs as they adapt to their environment (72) then Gaia is the result and permissive condition of this complex evolution, not its final cause or quartermaster. There is only one Gaia but Gaia is not One. She is 'a new political entity' whose name must be thought of like 'France' or 'Scotland' (135) – a power that collects a Collective.

¹⁸ Its luminosity has increased by around 37% since the Earth formed (Lovelock 2006, 29).

¹⁹ N.B. Although sometimes used interchangeably, planet Earth and Gaia are in fact distinct:

'Gaia is a thin spherical shell of matter that surrounds the [Earth's] incandescent interior [...]' (Lovelock 2006, 19).

Neither reductionist nor vitalist, her constituents neither ‘*de*-animated nor *over*-animated’ (59), Gaia is not insensitive to our actions, nor is she ‘disinterested’ – she is *inter-esse par excellence*.²⁰ Unlike Nature, she is a *fully* ‘secularised theological concept’ (Schmitt 2005, 36) of which one need suppose no absolute transcendence or immutability. However, though divine she is not benevolent in any way. In facing Gaia we are confronting a quite lethal *enemy*. Both Latour and Lovelock are convinced that it is only by using the language of war with respect to Gaia that we can be shaken out of our complacency and brought to our senses (cf. Latour 2004a). This secular divinity, this ‘roaring beast’ on which we are but ‘ticks’ (134), this fearsome foe that will inevitably ‘dictate the terms of peace’ between our conflicting parties (Lovelock 2009, 20; cf. Stengers 2011b, 163-64) – she is the *gē* of Latour’s geopolitics.

Sloterdijk

However, it is not only to Lovelock that Latour looks for earthly ideas. The text of *Facing Gaia* was dedicated to Peter Sloterdijk (2) in whom Latour finds, in some respects, a philosophical fellow traveller (e.g. Latour 1999b, 2009a; Sloterdijk 2013b, 228-36). Sloterdijk’s narration of modernity as the progressive ‘explicitation’ of the conditions necessary for life parallels Latour’s account of it as the increasing entanglement of humans and nonhumans, and his genealogy of ‘The Globe’ links closely with Latour’s rejection of modernist universalisms (Sloterdijk 2009, 2013a; Latour 2008a). However, Sloterdijk offers more than moral support and reinforcement. His ontology of atmospheres, envelopes, bubbles and foam (Sloterdijk 2011, 2014) fleshes out Latour’s ontology of networks, ameliorating its ‘anaemic’ fixation on lines, links and nodes, restoring volume and immersiveness. Latour connects the two regimes by metaphor, positing that ‘a cloth is nothing but a finely-woven network’ and, therefore, surfaces can be thought of as well-meshed networks with their porosity ‘depending on the density of the stitching’ (Latour 2011c, unpag.). This connection underwrites his subsequent assimilation of Sloterdijk’s ‘immunology,’ which Latour dubs ‘the first anthropocenic discipline’ (88). A sphere, not unlike Gaia, ‘is a world formatted by its inhabitants’ (Sloterdijk 2005, 232); immunology, then, studies the processes by which the interiorities of these ‘complex ecosystems’ are generated by ‘protective walls’ and ‘elaborate systems of air-conditioning’ (Latour 2011c). The *gē* in

²⁰ Latin *inter* ‘between,’ *esse* ‘to be.’

Latour's geopolitics must, therefore, signify not only Lovelock's Gaia but also Sloterdijk's spherological *Umwelten*.

Latour, Lovelock and Sloterdijk all converge upon a common realisation: that there is only one Earth, that 'we are imprisoned in its tiny local atmosphere' (56) and that we must therefore be *monogeists* (Sloterdijk 2013a, 6, 161) – those who know they have only one planet but 'don't know Its shape better than they knew the face of their God of old'; those who are confronted with 'a totally new kind of geopolitical theology' (97) and therefore require a radical renovation of political philosophy.

Lippmann

For Latour (2004a, 280-81; 2005a, 2008b), following Walter Lippmann and John Dewey, politics is ushered into existence by issues – 'no issue, no politics' (Marres 2005a, b). Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* founds this political philosophy:

Where the facts are most obscure, where precedents are lacking, where novelty and confusion pervade everything, the public in all its unfitness is compelled to make its most important decisions. The hardest problems are those which institutions cannot handle. They are the public's problems. (1925, 121)

Lippmann disavows the ideal of the 'omnicompetent citizen' (1925, 11) who could theoretically ground democracy by remaining abreast of all the issues concerning him; he therefore asserts the necessity of governance and professionalism. However, Lippmann also rejects the possibility of omnicompetent officials and thus affirms the necessity of public participation in situations where governance fails. The public that assembles around an issue does not govern; it wagers on either the 'Ins' or the 'Outs,' lending its force to one side or another in order to resolve intractable disputes (1925, 116).

Although rejecting Lippmann's technocratic tendencies (2004a, 281), Latour accepts the necessity of expertise and, consequently, of governance (128). The imperative, for Latour, is not to politicise everything but to detect where and when issues form and publics coagulate as a result; it is about making the right matters political at the right times, with suitable assemblies.

Dewey

In *The Public and its Problems* (1927), Dewey riposted Lippmann's pessimistic assessment of democratic possibility while nevertheless endorsing and developing his philosophy. For Dewey, like Lippmann, a public is brought into existence when the indirect consequences of 'conjoint action' are *perceived* as an issue that can only be resolved collectively.²¹ For Latour, our ecological predicament results from our chronic insensitivity, our inability (or unwillingness) to recognise the indirect consequences of our actions – in short, from our failure to be collected by Gaia.

[...] the loop that is necessary to draw any sphere, is *pragmatic* in John Dewey's sense of the word: you need to feel the consequences of your action before being able to represent yourself as having taken an action and realized what the world is like that resisted it. [...] No immunology is possible, without high sensitivity to those multiple, controversial, entangled loops. (94, 96)

Here Lippmann and Dewey stitch together Lovelock and Sloterdijk. Geopolitics requires *political aesthetics* – a continual renovation of the 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière 2004; Yusoff 2010), the never ending tracing of the 'loops' of cause and consequence that bring interested publics into existence. This task is as scientific [ref] and artistic [fic] as it is political (Dewey 1927, 184).

The *polity* in Latour's geopolitics is, as before, a dynamic, complex and scale-nonspecific public space in which concerned constituents work out their issues through assorted mediators and representatives. However, there is now an added urgency: it is not only the *needs* of non-human friends that must be represented but also the 'vengeful,' non-linear *mobilisations* of the enemy.

Serres

An old ally (Latour 1987a), Michel Serres' *The Natural Contract* ([1990]1995) foreshadows much of Latour's work and is an essential reference point for *Facing Gaia* (126). For Serres, as for Lovelock-Latour, our senseless parasitism of nature plunges us into a 'war' against the world itself, which reacts by threatening overwhelming

²¹ A matter needn't be produced by or susceptible to human causality for it to be 'political,' it need only assemble those concerned by it (Latour 2004b). Cf. Clark (2011, 2013b, 2014) who interprets Latour contrariwise.

violence. Only two options are then availed: ‘death or symbiosis.’ Political science thus becomes ‘geopolitics in the sense of the real Earth’ (1995, 34, 44). The sympathetic resonances with *Facing Gaia* are obvious; however, the crucial element *vis-à-vis* Latour’s project is Serres’ collapsing of the distinction between scientific and social laws:

What language do the things of the world speak, that we might come to an understanding with them, contractually? [...] the Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds, and interactions [...] (1995, 39).

Serres makes all natural relations, including gravitation (1995, 108-9), a matter of cosmic legality in order to do for humans-in-nature what Rousseau did for humans-in-society: imagine a peace-making ‘contract’ (cf. Burdon 2015).

Cybernetics (from *kybernetikos* ‘good at steering’ and *kybernetes* ‘steersman,’ ‘guide’ or ‘governor’) is defined by Serres as the ‘art of steering or governing by loops’ (1995, 42). Gaia, according to Latour, is cybernetic in this ‘old and frightening sense of the word’: she is ‘a politically assembled’ entity with ‘the ability to steer our action’ by imposing ‘limits, loops and constraints’ (135). She is both the geohistorical product of these spiraling, serpentine relations and the inter-agency that quells or amplifies them according to her own agenda. Her discipline is brutal and inescapable, her ‘sovereignty’ undeniable (135). However, within her boundaries, beings can attain auto-nomy by conforming the *nomos* to which they conform – they can, like the quasi-subjects of politics, ‘obey their own rules’ (137).

Serres also shares Latour’s regard for religion, noting its complex etymology that may derive from *relegare* (to go through again, reprise), *religare* (to attach) or *religiens* (careful, opposite of *negligens*); Serres suggests that religion inherits from all three roots but particularly the latter: ‘Whoever has no religion should not be called an atheist or unbeliever, but negligent’ (1995, 47-8). Both Latour and Serres demand a religious orientation towards the secular, the mundane, the worldly.

While embracing the idea of politico-legal relations with (some) non-humans, Latour rejects Serres’ idyll of harmony and symbiosis as out-dated:

[...] in a quarter of the century, things have become so urgent and violent that the somewhat pacific project of a contract among parties seems unreachable. [...] The

best we can hope for is to stick to a new sort of *jus gentium* [law of nations].
(Latour 2014a, 5).

Schmitt

We encountered ‘the toxic and unavoidable Carl Schmitt’ (101) first in *PoN*, where the notions of friend/enemy, decision and war/police operations were deployed. These concepts resurface in *AIME*’s Circle [pol] that is ‘exceptional’ at each stage and in Latour’s identification, alongside Lovelock, of an unpoliceable Gaian ‘war.’ In *Facing Gaia*, Latour draws extensively on both Schmitt’s *Political Theology* ([1922]2005) and, most significantly, his *Nomos of the Earth* ([1950]2003). If we are to go from being ‘Humans’ lost in an abstract, totalised, indifferent Nature to being ‘Earthbound’ housed under the concrete, pluralised, dangerous divinity of Gaia, Latour argues, we need to understand the specific spatial order, the *nomos* to which we are bound.

Nomos comes from *nemein* – a word that means both "to divide" and "to pasture."
Thus, *nomos* is the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible – the initial measure and division of pastureland, i.e., the land-appropriation as well as the concrete order contained in it and following from it. (Schmitt 2003, 70)

Moderns, for Latour, can neither declare nor defend their land, soil or *nomos* – and cannot, therefore, become ‘Earthbound’ – for the same reason that, in Abidjan, they seemed unanthropologisable: a culture with access to Nature via Science needs no explanation or justification. However, if Nature has lost its sovereignty, if we are gathered as *publics* by issues that *no* extant sovereign can decide, if the ‘frontier of modernisation’ and its *mission civilisatrice* have been rendered archaic by the rising East, if we are thus in a fully ‘diplomatic’ situation and if we are ‘at war’ with nothing less than a planetary divinity then we must overcome the kneejerk response that denounces the defence of any specific *terroir* [locality] as the work of a *cul-terreux* [yokel] or reactionary (Latour 2010c). On the contrary, in order to engage in geopolitics in the sense of the real Earth we must consider very carefully what sort of *soil* are we prepared to defend (114). Of course, ‘soil’ here bears no necessary relation with the *Blut und Boden* that the Schmittian language suggests. Instead we must ask: what are our valuable values? what are our immunological requirements? what are our *territories*?

Concepts

Territory

A territory is everything that you need to survive and that may suddenly *fail you*. [...] Of course the territory does not resemble the nicely coloured geographical maps of our classrooms. It is not made of nation states – the only actors that Schmitt was ready to consider – but of interlocking, conflicting, entangled, contradictory networks that no harmony, no system, no ‘third party,’ no overall Providence may unify in advance. Ecological conflicts do not bear on the nationalistic *Lebensraum* of the past but they do deal with ‘space’ and ‘life.’ The territory of an agent is the series of other agents that are necessary for it to survive on the long run, its *Umwelt*, its protective envelope. (119)

Tying together attachment, the pluralist reading of Gaia, Deweyan political aesthetics, Sloterdijk’s spherology and Schmitt’s Earthly *nomos*, ‘territory’ is perhaps the core concept of Latour’s geopolitics (Latour 2010c; Latour, November, and Camacho-Hübner 2010).²² It has little to do with territory in the historical, statist sense (e.g. Elden 2013a), nor is it equivalent to the conceptual ‘territory’ of Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

Every entity has a list of those things that it cannot do without. These lists are made explicit by ‘tests of deprivation [*épreuves de la privation*],’ and beings are constantly surprised by the heterogeneous array of dependencies that irrupt all around them. Only the most fortunate and well habited beings can take their territories for granted [att·hab].²³ When a previously reliable car breaks down or a Ukrainian politician threatens to shut off Europe’s gas supply, such events explicitate territories that are always under ‘threat of disappearance [*menace de la disparition*].’ Territories follow a topological rather than topographical spatial logic – the ‘bounded areas’ of traditional cartography are ‘uninhabitable.’ Metric proximity is unimportant in itself; ease of accrual and habitation are what matter and these qualities are spatially complex. Lastly, territorial relations are not unidirectional but reciprocal: a farm animal is in the

²² N.B. The French *territoire* [territory] has an obvious resonance with *terre* [earth] that is absent in English.

²³ Latin *habitare* ‘to live, dwell’; *habere* ‘to have, possess.’

territory of its farmer but the farmer is also in the territory of her animal (Latour 2010c, unpag.). Territories are *entanglements*.

This conceptualisation of territory as ‘an unbounded network of attachments and connections’ (Latour 2014b, 15) establishes a distinctive geopolitical condition: an economy doesn’t distribute goods circulating across a given territory, it *formats* the territories themselves; globalisation has nothing to do with ‘levels’ or ‘scales’ but rather concerns intensifications and extensions of entangled dependencies (Latour 1993); a Collective doesn’t have ‘a territory’ but rather *as many territories as it has constituents*; and geopolitics is not a matter of bickering over bounded surfaces but, rather, publicly contesting these poly-dimensional spaces. With this geopolitics shifts, to neologise, from *turf-wars* to *Earth-wars*.

Appropriation

Every important change in the image of Earth is inseparable from a political transformation, and so, from a new repartition of the planet, a new territorial appropriation. (Schmitt [1954]1997, 38)

For Schmitt, every *nomos* is founded by an act of territorial appropriation or *Landnahme* – a raw, arbitrary assertion of will that establishes the basis for all subsequent legal order. If all useable land has been appropriated by some sovereign state or other and if the Earth has been fully mapped and orbitally photographed then what further appropriations or transformations of imagery are possible? ‘Has humanity today actually "appropriated" the earth as a unity, so that there is nothing more to be appropriated?’ (Schmitt 2003, 335). Has geohistory come to an end?... It would seem not (143). The topological, ecological, theological imagings of the Earth as feedback loops, entangled territories, critical zones (Latour 2014e), planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009), competing cosmoses, belligerent divinities, porous envelopes and the *Umwelten* of every species couldn’t be more different to the Earth as something fully, finally, objectively known, framed in a ‘world picture.’ Even with saturation-level global surveillance, the ‘shape’ of the Earth is still not known – and it will never be known with finality because it is not a static, unchanging thing, prostrate before our interrogations. Perhaps we could know the shape of Mars because it is a dead planet but not the life-suffused Earth. No amount of epistemic extension will put an end to Earth’s

shifting imagery [fic-ref]. But what of appropriations? Who or what might be the ‘great appropriator’ of a new *nomos*?

Far from being the ‘land-appropriation,’ the *Landnahme* celebrated by Schmitt, it is rather the violent *re-appropriation* of all Humans’ titles *by the land itself*. [...]

When we begin to gather together as Earthbound, we realize that we are summoned by a power that is a fully political one since it possesses what is called in Anglo-American law ‘radical title’ to the whole land [...]. (136)

Many science fiction writers foresaw an expropriatory threat to humanity coming from outer-space or even from beneath the sea – but who could have predicted that it would come from *all around us*? Quite an irony: Mars cannot declare war but Earth can. *Revenge of Gaia*, indeed! *She* is the agent of this geohistorical transformation. It is as though we were trespassers on *her* land and she is fetching her gun...

The will to colonise The Globe territorially, economically and metaphysically has been exposed for the folly it always was. The mere rotundity of the planet is incidental – a quaintly preliminary discovery (cf. Mackinder 1904). Geo-graphy *qua* Gaia-graphy is, for Latour, not an ‘aid to [imperial] statecraft’ (Parker 1982) but the science, transcending social/natural disciplinarity, that describes the ‘front lines’ of this planetary confrontation, laying out the *problems* of our collective geopolitics.

Decision

If we are to enter into a ‘power sharing’ (136) arrangement with Gaia, to stake out a kind of Schmittian *Großraum*,²⁴ then the Collective’s interiority and exteriority must be determined [pol]; the Optimum must be calculated, means and ends distributed [mor]. ‘Yes, there are beings that do not deserve to exist. Yes, some constructions are badly made. Yes, we have to judge and decide’ (2013c, 142). Latour concedes that the ‘dosage’ of Schmitt’s concepts ‘should be watched as carefully as we would do with a powerful poison’ (113); however, he makes no apology for imbibing this *pharmakon*.²⁵

The great virtue of dangerous and reactionary thinkers like Schmitt is to force us to make a choice much starker than that of so many wishy-washy ecologists still

²⁴ Literally ‘large-space,’ more accurately ‘sphere of influence.’

²⁵ A substance that is a cure or poison depending on dosage.

swayed by unrelenting hope. Schmitt's choice is terribly clear: either you agree to tell foes from friends, and then you engage in politics, sharply defining the borderlines of real enough wars – 'wars about what the world is made of' –; or you shy away from waging wars and having enemies, but then you *do away with* politics [...]. (105)

The 'hard, dark job of politics' – beautiful souls need not apply – may turn stomachs but there is no alternative (105-6).²⁶ The Modern Constitution was only superficially humanist. Only collectives organised in a preconceived fashion (i.e. as nation states) were recognised as collectives at all; the rest were 'primitives' to be alternately exploited and patronised. Moderns were to hold pre-Moderns either by the throat or by the hand. During the *nomos* of the *jus publicum Europaeum* (Schmitt 2003) 'natives' had no *moyen* to the land, the so-called '*terra nullius*,' on which they merely lived [rep·law]. Today, such human-on-human domination is considered the foulest of crimes; however, non-humans remain in such a state of exception. Kant's moral Kingdom may have sufficed in 1785 (or even 1985) but not today.

We have infringed the environment of the other species, just as if, in the affairs of nation states, we had occupied the land of other nations. (Lovelock 2006, 13)

Our planetary omni-exploitation was permissible under the geopolitical theology of Nature – that immutable, eternal exterior – but Gaia, our 'hypersensitive' sovereign-landlord, is responding to our imperial overreach with menacingly muttered eviction notices. Consequently, we must beat a hasty retreat – an orderly one if we are clever, a frantic, desperate one if we are not; and, in order to do that, we must overcome Kant's inadequate generosity by extending moral hesitation to *all* Gaia's constituents. We cannot retreat into nothingness, into utopian nowhere – we need food, we need fuel, we need air... [rep·mor]; however, making the whole world our means is as impossible as making it all our ends. Our very existence depends on knowing our place, our limits, our *nomos*, our cosmos (119). Decisions must, therefore, be made – indeed, they *are* being made, if not by 'due process' then otherwise. The best we can hope for is to make these decisions *better*. This responsibility cannot be shirked; the Earthbound have more

²⁶ Cf. the quasi-Machiavellian *realpolitik* of Latour's earlier works (Latour 1987b, 1988a, b; Harman 2014).

enemies than Gaia – enemies who understand the dark arts of politics very well indeed (Latour 2013f; Michaels 2008).

Earthbound

The strength of Reason is also its weakness: it believes that it requires no justification, no life-support, no air-conditioning, no networks. Years ago this is what set a younger, bristlingly iconoclastic Latour out to destroy the bifurcation between force and reason and tear down the technoscientific ‘war machine.’ However, we have long since passed ‘peak critique’; unvarnished cynicism towards science has been ‘miniaturised,’ mobilised and absorbed by all manners of nefariousness (Latour 2004b; Stengers 2011c). Scientific reason must be saved from itself – it must be grounded: ‘Earthbound scientists are fully incarnated creatures. They are a people. They have enemies.’ They recognise that it is their instruments, their institutions, their circuits of informative transformations [ref] that make them strong, not their transcendent access to an airless, otherworldly ‘Nature’ [dc]; they have dependencies and must therefore calculate and defend their territories; they are open about their fears and motivations and proclaim that such passions [met·att] *strengthen* their intuitions; ‘pixel after pixel, data point after data point’ they populate the Collective, make the world speak and ceaselessly renovate the distribution of the sensible. They thus become ‘a new form of non-national power having a stake in geopolitical conflicts’ (120). Modernist celebrants of Science still labouring under their Sisyphean ‘obligation to undeceive minds’ (Latour 2013c, 171), will surely linger but the Earthly sciences (Latour 2007a), another nation that ‘eludes all borders,’ demand unrepentant allegiance [pol] (Latour 2014f, 63).

However, the Earthbound’s salvation depends not only on science but also on religion; both manners of immanence-production are needed – science, which produces *information* through the transformations of *reference*; and religion, which produces *tradition* through the torments of *reverence*. Earthbound religion, as in *AIME*, is that which tremulates the humdrum rhythms of daily existence [hab], personifying by rendering us lovingly hypersensitive to the nearby, the *prochain* – the opposite of negligence. It is only by becoming religiously, assiduously ‘*occupied and preoccupied* by the Earth’ (141) that we can begin to compose ourselves with her. Earthbound religion leads not to ‘another world,’ either astronomically or spiritually, but to ‘this same world grasped in a radically new way’; it leads us to ‘the time of the end’ [rel·mor] (138-39; cf. Anders 1962).

Finally, if the Earthbound can be tied to the *anthropos* of the Anthropocene, neither should be conflated with ‘the human race.’

Indian nations in the middle of the Amazonian forest have nothing to do with the ‘anthropic origin’ of climate change – at least so long as politicians have not been distributing chainsaws at election times. Nor do the poor blokes in the slums of Mumbai, who can only dream of having a bigger carbon footprint than the black soot belching out of their makeshift ovens. Nor does the worker who is forced to drive long commutes because she has not been able to find an affordable house near the factory where she works. (80)

To begin from ‘humanity’ as a pre-given unity, unveiled by science, ‘beneath’ the tiresomely fluctuating vicissitudes of subjectivity, would only short-circuit the ‘demogenesis’ needed to birth the Earthbound. Instead, *anthropos* must be disaggregated ‘into many different people with contradictory interests, opposing cosmoses’ (81). It is not that the scientific perspective is not valid; it is that no one party, not even the sciences, gets to read the Book of Gaia, much less write it – and less still to force that Book on uninitiated Others (Debaise et al. 2015; Latour 2014d).

Diplomacy

So, what is to be done? The sciences have now been reaccommodated in another Constitution, religion too; every mode has been granted its own thread of experience, its own truth conditions and, therefore, its own rationality; everything has been pluralised, anthropologised, prepared for diplomacy – and so there is no reason to shy away from cosmopolitics for the sake of maintaining a ‘critical attitude,’ no reason to shrug at the Enlightenment.

Westerners, get up on your feet! It’s up to you now to fight for your place in the sun! [...] reason is not so weak that it can never win. It has just been a little too long since it had a chance to fight, for lack of real enemies acknowledged as such [...]. Screaming "relativism!" whenever one is faced with trouble is not enough to keep oneself in good marching order, ready for the extension – yes, the extension – of rationality. (Latour 2002b, 37)

The ‘blackmail of the Enlightenment’ (Foucault 1984, 42) – that it is something one must be either for or against – thus becomes an archaism but so does the traditional

response to it (Latour 2004b). ‘Critique,’ for the Earthbound, is one competency, one capability among others (Boltanski 2011); just one relatively blunt implement in a much larger toolbox. Yes, ‘everything is dangerous’ (Foucault 1984, 343); but everything is also *endangered* – and so we have more to do than ever.

Because Western values have been put at *risk* and, like the polytheisms of old (Assmann 2010), have become *translatable* (10-12), all those old, enlightened dreams of solidarity that the Moderns so adored can be pursued again as geopolitical *propositions* that operate through techniques not of universalisation but of *belonging* [tec·pre] (Stengers 2013). Thus dislocated from the dominion of the ‘true self,’ a ‘middle ground’ (White 1991) can finally be encountered. This may seem like a humiliating demotion to some; however, if Westerners could stop flagellating either others or themselves for a moment, they might realise that while they should not be pompously prideful in their proposals nor should they exoticise those of others:

None of those so called ‘traditional’ people, the wisdom of which we often admire, is being prepared to scale up their ways of life to the size of the giant technical metropolises in which are now corralled more than half of the human race. (128)

Westerners need no longer pose as either Gods *or* Devils. After unconditionally relinquishing their imperial iconoclasm (Latour 1999a, 266-92; 2004b, 2010e), after recognising the fragility of their own ecologies of practices (Stengers 2011c, 2013), they must begin to *advocate* their collective values in ‘the planetary negotiation that is already underway’ (Latour 2013c, 17; 2011a).

Geohistory

However, geopolitics, as Latour proposes it, bursts the seams of inter-tribal parleys. Gaia is herself a political power – a cybernetic, autonomy-enabling sovereign, perchance an enemy, with radical title to all but the planet’s darkest depths. The loops and bonds by which she guides, governs and punishes are the very self-interested trajectories of her constituents that subtly alter their environments in order to render their future thriving more probable (72). Gaia is not just the *scene* of politics, nor a violent *interjection* to it, but a dramatic, swirling *convolution* of world-convening relations – a collective constituted by all the constituents that she collects. Human politics explicates, amplifies and formalises *what was already happening* – non-human

Gaians already format their spheres, adore their attachments, adapt their environments, measure their means, cultivate their cultures, nurture their natures. Each in their own ways, at wildly varying intensities, through spiraling, sinuous movements that ensnare, ensphere, entwine and envelop, all Gaians ‘geopolitic.’

Is this an extension of politics? Indeed it is. How strange to have thought that only Humans are ‘political animals’? What about animals? What about all sorts of animated agencies? None of them should be de-animated to the point of having no voice at all; nor should they be over-animated to the point of speaking in the comic repertoire of anthropomorphic citizens. (137)

Are we returned, then, to the blunt, monoscopic naïveté of *Irreductions* where every thing is political and politics is everything? Not at all. These tendrilous encirclings don’t extend to dead planets like Mars. Asteroids, nebulae and atoms are, of course, effervescently creative in their own magnificent, primordial ways [rep·met] – and to stardust you shall return... – but it is only here, immersed in life, that we can witness the rich, sparking harmonics of this unique crossing [rep·pol]; only here, on the sublunar²⁷ Earth, is there the raw, focused inter-sensitivity needed to beget a geo-polis; only here, amidst the geohistory of the Gaian *kybernetes*, can constituents become so reactively, responsively, aesthetically acute as to undergo the circuitous composition of a cosmos. However, *responsiveness* is not *responsibility*. Gaia can summon no Leviathan (136); there is a Great Society but no Great Community (Dewey 1927). Of course, it is not that Gaia ‘lacks’ the appurtenances of a formalised polity *per se* – it is only we Earthbound that such a supplement impels; it is, rather, that Gaia, our past and our present, will only be our future – we will only *have* a future – if such an assembly is realised.

The Earthbound do not share the burden of the White Man. Gaia will be grasped by neither throat nor hand. There will be no *mission civilisatrice* extending meaning, morality, religion and politics into the inert, otherworldly shadow-land of an absolutely indifferent Nature. ‘Things in themselves lack nothing, just as Africa did not lack whites before their arrival’ (Latour 1988a, 193). There are enemies to be declared but no barbarians to be vanquished; the brook only babbles if our sciences (or, perhaps, our

²⁷ Literally ‘beneath the moon’ but, more specifically, ‘earthly’ or ‘Earthbound’ (e.g. Sloterdijk 2013a, 17-19).

poets) have not yet learned its tongue.²⁸ Gaians are already impeccably articulate. However, things do not and will never *speaking for themselves* – they have to be coaxed, collected, represented; de-scissions will always be made *de facto* but *due process* is a philosopher's dream; it may be that every existent agonises over means and ends but to calculate the Optimum, to transform the city into a state, to furnish these self-relating, self-serving vectors with the elaborate, cosmos-assembling capabilities of science, art, religion and politics: *these* are the tasks thrust upon the Earthbound.

However, Gaia, our terrible we-know-not-what, does not negotiate (Hamilton 2014). It is we who must negotiate her, as both navigators and diplomats. Our charts and translation tables are no sooner assembled than made obsolete; our fumbling palms scramble ceaselessly just to keep up. Our sovereign hears no appellants – only through our atmo-chemical perturbations are we even perceptible (cf. Uexküll 2010). She is hypersensitive but only interested in herself; her discipline is undisputable; through her sheer dynamism any hope of symbiosis is dashed. And yet, for all that, Gaia offers us a home, an *oikos* – the only such offer that we will ever receive (*pace* science fiction). Her *nomos* of the Earth may not be ours and it is she, radically entitled, that will dictate the terms of the peace. But another Earthbound world, Latour will argue, *is possible*; and it begins with the renegotiation of all values.

Conclusion

When Kjellén coined '*Geopolitik*' in *fin de siècle* Sweden, he took it to form part of a holistic, neo-Linnaean knowledge system that would rationally inform the efficient utilisation of state power. '*Politik*,' for Kjellén, simply denoted 'the theory of the state,' which was defined as 'a geographical organism or phenomenon in space' (Kjellén quoted in: Holdar 1992, 312). '*Geo-*' therefore signified 'the territory, or the realm, of the State as its body' (Holdar 1992, 312; cf. Ratzel 1897; Semple 1911; Mackinder 1931; Haushofer [1942]1998). Geography as a discipline has long since overcome such reactionary reductionisms and their fixation on the planet's fertile surface. However, in the process 'geopolitics' was abstracted from the earth *per se* and became, as Elden laments, 'conflated with global politics or political geography writ-large' (2013b, 15).

The manner in which Latour's latest works help to reacquaint *geo-* with *gē* should, by now, be obvious. His creative geo-ontology grounds human – or, rather,

²⁸ 'Babble' and 'barbarian' both relate to *barbaros* 'non-Greek-speaking.'

Earthbound – politics in a terrestrial condition that is inextricably elemental, indomitably pluralistic and radically empirical. No longer a ‘static frame,’ the very ‘composition of the ground itself, from the bedrock to the atmosphere just above it’ (Latour 2014c, 3) becomes geopolitical. However, after Latour we cannot ask ‘what is the *geo-* in geopolitics?’ without also asking ‘what is the *politics*?’ Both sides of the equation, as we have seen, are transformed in his account. Moreover, his liberally sketched Gaian scenography collects far more than the Critical Zones of geochemistry and the Circlings of political existence. His ‘new geopolitics of the Anthropocene’ wills to convolve all the imponderably plethoric rhythms and cadences that make our home planet, our *oikos*, hum and judder with the vibrations of life.

In this much, there are important resonances between Latour’s work and that of Elizabeth Grosz whose writings have, to date, provided the principal philosophical inspiration for ‘rethinking the *geo-*’ in political geographical debates (e.g. Yusoff et al. 2012). However, Grosz’s political ontology is, from Latour’s perspective, unacceptable in that it defines politics in terms of power.

What we understand as the history of politics – the regulations, actions and movements of individuals and collectives relative to other individuals and collectives – is possible only because geopower has already elaborated an encounter between forms of life and forms of the earth. [...] Power – the relations between humans, or perhaps even between living things – is a certain, historically locatable capitalisation on the forces of geopower. (Grosz in: Yusoff et al. 2012, 975)

Geopolitics for Grosz would, therefore, concern the manner in which ‘the regulations, actions and movements of individuals and collectives’ – the worldly workings of political power – presuppose the subtensive out-flowings and up-takings of geopower. This conception is inadmissible for Latour as it erases the specificity of the political mode of action (cf. Rancière 2001). Power does not beget politics, issues do.

This disjunction distinguishes Latour from not only Grosz but also more or less the entire history of geopolitical thought. Of course, it jars with the reactionary lineage of Kjellén through Kissinger to Kaplan (2012); however, more interestingly, it also contrasts with both the tradition of critical geopolitics (e.g. Dalby 1991; Tuathail 1996) and those who would seek to base a reformed geopolitics on Foucault’s biopolitics (e.g. Elden 2013b, 15; 2015; Foucault 2008). Latour makes a strong distinction between

politics and governance, the latter comprising not a mode of action but, rather, an arrangement of organisational and technical competencies that, if overextended, in fact smothers politics (e.g. Latour 2013c, 336). From that point of view, if bio- and geopolitics come to signify various techniques of governance or governmentalities then politics *per se* is thereby effaced, reduced to power and varieties of resistance thereto. It matters little, then, how dispersed, decentred or deinstrumentalised power is said to be; there is scarcely more ‘politics,’ modally defined, in Foucault’s biopolitics or Grosz’s geopower than there is in Kjellén’s *Geopolitik*.

This need not, however, mean that these bodies of work are incompatible. Developing the above, one might distinguish between geopolitics, *geogovernance* and *geostrategy*, the latter pair being the civilian and military wings of a broad assemblage of collective technics. Analysis of such apparatuses would be no less crucial to understanding collective and inter-collective relations than the strictly ‘political’ and, with our conceptual vocabulary thus expanded, Latour’s political ontology could be combined with the insights of other forms of geopolitics, forming a sharply discerning yet flexible matrix for the analysis of geopolitical problems of all kinds. However, while Latour’s work presents demonstrable possibilities – or, at the very least, provocations – it is not without its problems.

First, ‘the West.’ Simon Dalby (2003, 193) is not alone in noticing that Latour often conflates ‘Modern’ and ‘West,’ melding them ‘into a single geopolitical entity’. Latour is by no means consistent with these designations. In *AIME* ‘the Moderns’ are performatively engaged as an actually existing people, albeit one with a ‘variable geometry’ and ‘elastic borders’ (2013c, 8, 14), while ‘Western,’ ‘Modern,’ ‘White’ and ‘European’ are used seemingly interchangeably, with obviously polemical intent. Elsewhere he claims that ‘the West no longer exists’ and instead there are only ‘Europeans, North Americans, French, Japanese [...]’ (2007b, 19). These terms – Modern, Western, etc. – might be best understood as conceptual characters or ‘charitable fictions’ that facilitate research on an inquisitorial terrain that regularly shifts. However, if this is pardonable for a speculative philosopher, it is deeply problematic for political geographers and forms one of the main obstacles to the adoption of Latour’s ideas.

Second, Schmitt. No mass of caveats or pluralisations is capable of muffling the shrill, fascist howling of the infamously ignoble ‘Crown Jurist of the Third Reich’ and ‘Lenin of the bourgeoisie’ (Müller 2003, 4). Undoubtedly, it is the very unsettling

prickliness of a Schmitt, Hobbes or Machiavelli that makes these such important thinkers; and, indeed, one decade's irredeemable monster might be another's much needed bucket of cold water – even intellectual histories do not end. However, Latour does not do enough to cleanly extricate his concepts from the all too chilling nomenclature of blood and soil. Adopting Chantal Mouffe's (2005) distinction between agonism and antagonism might debarb Schmitt further; however, the history of political thought is a deep well and one wonders if there aren't less troublesome resources to be hoisted.

Third, and relatedly, war. Latour defines 'war,' after Schmitt, in a broadly technical manner: 'war does not mean necessarily blood and weapons,' but rather 'the absence of a referee'; however, in the same breath he underscores the jolting emotivity of war-talk: 'Everyone understands what is meant by such a danger: "Call the police!" "Prepare for war, the enemy is coming!"' (2013b, 112). He concedes that 'it is somewhat nauseating to hear academics rant on about doom, blood and war'; however, he makes no apologies: 'no amount of warm feelings' will save us (2013b, 99; cf. Lovelock 2006, 197). Latour is of course correct that serious ecological threats often seem too 'distant' to provoke political action, even when they are far more objectively foreseen than the conventional security threats that transfix entire civilisations (Latour 2014f). His martial terminology shouldn't be considered profane but nor is its necessity obvious. One can demand a vocabulary that eschews the casual cosiness of conventional political theory without resorting to such blunt instruments. A climate scientist arguing fiercely with a denialist at a public meeting may lack a 'sovereign' to whom he can appeal to settle the dispute; however, no matter how much they bellow – no matter even if they brawl – they are not 'at war' in a sense that should be so easily literalised. If Earth-wars are in our future then further turf-wars surely are also. We would do well to remember the difference between heated arguments and charred flesh, even if we are staring at a future that is going up in flames (cf. Latour 2007a). Are we at wholesale (Earth-)war with Gaia? Quite possibly. But amongst ourselves? Not yet...

Bruno Latour is often critiqued though rarely well; his thought, both brilliant and problematic, deserves its critics for both reasons. Only a few dissenting comments have been offered in this 'charitable' reading – doubtless others will object otherwise. However, whatever its degree of objectionability, there is no doubt that Latour's work offers a veritable trove of thought and provocation to disciplinary geopolitics and cognate academic clusters wheresoever instituted. So, if 'inheritance is an activity'

(McGee 2013, 177), how will we inherit from Latour's geo-politico-philosophical reassemblies?

I grant that it is hard for the young people born after us to inherit from the so-called May '68 generation; but can someone tell me what we were supposed to do with the legacies left behind by the generations of "August '14," "October '17," and "June '40"? Not an easy task, to inherit from the twentieth century! (Latour 2013c, 281)

Indeed not. One could tell the story of this fact with the history of the word 'geopolitics' alone. If nothing else, I hope I have shown that these two problems of inheritance – from Latour, from geopolitics – would be well worked through together.

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